

Combined Effects of Ethical Leadership and Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) on Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction

Syeda Madiha Kanwal Batool, Asma Gul, and Khurram Shahzad¹

Abstract

This paper examines the direct and interactive effect of ethical leadership and Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) on employee's organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Using a self administered survey questionnaire, data was collected from 237 employees working in public and private sector services organization. Data analysis using moderated regression analysis showed positive effects of both ethical leadership and Islamic work ethics on organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Also, as hypothesized, it was found that Islamic work ethics positively moderate the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Islamic Work Ethics, Ethical Leadership, Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction.

1. Introduction

'Work Ethics' has become a widely investigated topic in recent years. In particular the concept originates from Max Weber's theory of Protestant Work Ethics (PWE). The heart of this theory is "Religious Belief" and its relation to work attitudes. Cherrington (1995) stated that the characteristics of work ethics derived from Weber's theory, contained elements of honesty, commitment to work, thrift investment, time management and hard work. Weber (1958) claimed that Islam is not capable of producing Protestant work ethics values. However Arslan

¹ Corresponding author, Dr. Khurram Shahzad is Associate Professor, Faculty of Management Sciences, Riphah International University (RIU) Islamabad; kshahzad78@yahoo.com

Syeda Madiha Kanwal Batool is MS Scholar, Faculty of Management Sciences, RIU; and Ms. Asma Gul is Research Associate, Faculty of Management Sciences, RIU, Islamabad.

(2000; 2001) challenged the applicability of Weber's thesis and provided empirical support to refute it. Later studies proved that nevertheless with all its manifestations Weber's theory is limited in non Western societies. These limitations evoked researchers from the Islamic world to define work ethics according to their religious beliefs i.e. Islamic work ethics (IWE) thus answering to the criticism made by Weber.

The concept of ethics in Islam is derived from Qur'ān and Sunnah (Rokhman, 2010). Qur'ān strictly forbids unethical behavior like unlawful conduct, deception, wasting time, and laziness and teaches faithful involvement and commitment to work as an obligation (Ali & Ali, 2007). In addition, Islamic work ethics provide a base for moral excellence and work orientation (Rizk, 2008). Hence it is as clear as day that IWE provide a comprehensive set of values for all aspects of professional and social life.

Despite the significance of Islamic work ethics in professional and social life, only a few researches have paid attention to the concept including Ali, 1988; Yousef, 2000, 2001; Arslan 2000, 2001; Rahman, Muhammad & Othman, 2006; Hayati 2007; Ali & Al-Kazemi, 2007; Rokhman 2010; Haroon, Zaman & Rehman 2012. Likewise, Islamic work ethics and employees works outcomes (job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intention) received little attention by the researchers (Rokhman, 2010). Yousef (2000) being the first in this regard examined the relationship between Islamic work ethics and attitudes towards organizational change among employees in the United Arab Emirates with mediating role of organizational commitment. Furthermore, Yousef (2001) investigated that Islamic work ethics intensify the relationships between employee's organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Recent corporate scandals and the collapse of multinational corporations like Enron and Armstrong has shocked the business world. It is reported that this failure was mainly due to unethical behaviours leading to bankruptcy. For this reason, senior executives have been accused for committing unethical acts. As a case in point, Bernie Ebbers the CEO of WorldCom lost his credibility because of not being able to provide moral leadership, hence resulting in corporate bankruptcy. Therefore, it is not unexpected to note that researchers have started to pay adequate attention to the behavior of leaders in organizations and its consequences in terms of employees' work outcomes because leaders direct their employees and influence them with actions. Leaders having a complete set of ethical framework, working within ethical boundaries and employees exhibiting

IWE can no doubt rock together bringing their organizations to remarkable success. Existing research has examined the outcomes of ethical leadership and IWE but the interplay of these two variables has not gained attention of organizational behavior scholars. So the present study addresses this omission by examining the interactive effect of ethical leadership and IWE on job outcomes (job satisfaction and organizational commitment) in addition to their main effects on these job outcomes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is defined as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005, p. 120). This definition is based on the study made by Trevino, Brown and Hartman (2003) according to which an ethical leader should not only be a moral manager but a moral person as well. While going back to the basics of ethical leadership, its focus lies in the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which says that people learn to behave from those who are role models for them, and being inspired by them tend to imitate their behaviors.

In a similar vein, Ladkin (2008) introduced the concept of “leading beautifully” arguing that an ethical leader is the one who has the ability to serve the best for all human interests. Notably, through his moral conduct an ethical leader ideally influences his followers to behave in an ethical way (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing & Peterson, 2008). Ethical leadership allows the followers not only to thrive as human beings by having felt the presence of flourishing conditions but it also influences them in moral terms causing them to behave ethically (Ciulla, 2004). The following section explores the literature about the relationship of ethical leadership with job satisfaction and organizational commitment respectively.

2.2 Ethical Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Locke defined job satisfaction as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (1976: p. 1304). It is a degree to which employees are inclined to their work (Elickson, 2002). Thus, it is an attitude towards work that is related to organization’s ethical context especially when it is believed that leaders actually develop an ethical conduct within the organization (Protass, 2008). Empirical works by Brown et al. (2005) opened new avenues in the

area of ethical leadership relating it positively with outcomes like job satisfaction and willingness to put extra effort etc. For example, ethical climate is a source of extending the impact of ethical leadership, thereby influencing job satisfaction of employees in a positive manner. Hence, the satisfied and loyal employees develop valuable work attitudes for the company (Neubert, Carlson, Kacmar, Roberts & Chonko, 2009).

In recent years many studies have empirically discovered the positive impact of ethical leadership on employees work outcomes and organisation e.g. ethical leadership is found to increase the job satisfaction of the followers (Neubert et al., 2009). In another study ethical leadership is found to increase the satisfaction of employees with the leader and willingness to put in extra effort towards organization goals (Toor & Ofori, 2009). An interesting finding by Piccolo, Greenbaum, Hartog and Folger (2010) illustrated that ethical leadership of managers makes the job more meaningful for the followers. In a study by Walumbura et al. (2008) a positive influence of ethical leadership on job satisfaction has been reported. Similarly some recent studies showed that ethical leadership escalates the job satisfaction of subordinates (Neubert et al., 2009; Ruiz, Ruiz & Martínez, 2011; Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2012). Therefore it is proposed that:

***H₁:** Ethical leadership is positively related to employees' job satisfaction.*

2.3 Ethical Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has been defined by many researchers, however the most frequently used definition was proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990) as a psychological state which helps to bind the individual to organisation. Relating organizational commitment to the ethical conduct of organization, Trevino, Butterfield and McCabe (1998) argued that employees feel themselves more committed to the organization which encourages ethical conduct as perceived by them. According to Henkin and Marchiori (2003), organizational commitment is a feeling which not only enforces employees to stay with that organization but also helps them to select their goals keeping in view the norms and values as well as ethical standard of that organization. Similarly Cullen, Victor and Bronson (1993) empirically investigated the perceptions of a fair climate as positively related and egoistic climate to be negatively related to commitment.

In the last decade ethical leadership research is found to be positively related with organizational commitment. For example, organizational commitment increases when supervisors exhibit ethical leadership (Neubert et al., 2009; Walumbura et al., 2008; Brown et al., 2005).

Moreover, a study by Ruiz et al. (2011) illustrated that practicing ethical leadership results in a higher commitment towards organization. Thus, ethical leadership is a source of increasing the level of commitment and optimism towards organization (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). So it can be proposed that:

H₂: Ethical leadership is positively related to organizational commitment.

2.4 Islamic Work Ethics (IWE)

Work ethics are an important aspect of employment. It is an admitted fact that positive work ethics lead to increase in employees work outcomes e.g. job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Most of the research on work ethics is conducted in western culture (Rizk, 2008) based on Weber Max's theory of Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) (Weber, 1958). Yousaf (2000) pointed out the similarities between IWE and PWE as both are based on true spirit of hard work, increase organizational commitment, promote cooperation among employees, enhance creativity and time management and forbid unethical conduct; but Islamic work ethics surpass Protestant work ethics as IWE relies on intensions rather than results (Yousaf, 2001).

IWE appeared as a variable of key interest to Muslim researchers in 1980's. The theory of IWE formulated by Ali (1988) is based on Quran and Sunnah. Ali was the first to develop a scale for Islamic Work Ethics. Researchers from the Muslim world have illustrated that Islamic work ethics deem work as a duty and goodness in order to fulfill a person's needs to balance his/her social and individual life (Ali & Al Owaihan, 2008). They further said that the concept of IWE demonstrates the ideology of work ethics presented by Islam considering work as a noble deed. The focus of IWE is on cooperation in work and consultation which promotes the creative work as a source of happiness and success (Yousef, 2000). Arslan (2000) also noted that business is much affected by the religious motives of concerned individuals. He argued that the Sufi Movements in Turkey was similar to the eighteenth century Calvinism which appeared in the Northern Europe.

In the proceeding section, Islamic work ethics have been studied in relation with job satisfaction and organizational commitment respectively.

2.5 Islamic Work Ethics and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an important variable and many studies have found the relationship between Islamic work ethics and job satisfaction. For example, Lambert and Hogan (2009) found that the major influencing factor for job satisfaction is work ethics. Yousef (2001) has proved that

IWE like PWE is positively related to job satisfaction in employees from United Arab Emirates. Rahman et al. (2006) studied whether Islamic work ethics relate to stress level and improve job satisfaction in workplace. Rokhman (2010) has further confirmed this and reported that there is a positive and significant relationship between IWE and job satisfaction. Another study also reported job satisfaction to be increased in the presence of IWEs (Weeks, Terry, Loe & Kirk 2004). In a similar vein an important study by Ahmed (2011) established that IWE is capable of building high morale leading to greater job satisfaction. It implies that IWE is an important part of Muslim belief system, so employees who have high Islamic work ethics show increased satisfaction level with their job. When employees feel that they are working according to the standards of Islamic ethical values, it leads them to high satisfaction, giving them a sense of compliance and pursuit towards Islamic principles. So we propose that:

H₃: Islamic work ethics are positively related to job satisfaction.

2.6 Islamic Work Ethics and Organizational Commitment

Islamic work ethics can be predictor of employees' organizational commitment. For example, Yousef (2000) explored that Islamic work ethics of employees enhance their commitment towards organization. Furthermore, Mu'tasim, Nordin and Abdullah (2006) reported a direct relationship between Islamic work ethics and organizational commitment. Working on a sample of Malaysian employees, Rahman et al. (2006) concluded a significant and positive relationship between organizational commitment and IWE. Another study, Nor (2010) found that Islamic work ethics positively affect organizational commitment. Furthermore, in a recent study Rokhman (2010) added to literature by finding out the direct relationship of IWE on work outcomes taking a sample of Indonesian employees. His results strongly supported that Islamic Work ethics positively influence employees' organizational commitment. Thus, employees with high level of Islamic work ethics feel that they are making efforts for legal provision (rizq-e-halal) which ultimately increases their commitment for their organization. On these bases it is hypothesized that:

H₄: Islamic work ethics are positively related to organizational commitment.

2.7 Moderating Effect of Islamic Work Ethics

As mentioned earlier, recent corporate scandals have emerged due to unethical acts on part of the managers (Schaubroeck, et al. 2007) leading to the need for ethical leadership. However, a manager alone can do nothing no matter how strongly he exhibits ethical leadership. Thus the

issue of ethical leadership demands work ethics at each organizational level not only by supervisors, but employees as well (Bashir, 2008).

As a general matter, managers who practice ethical leadership are found to be affecting the organization members through their interpersonal relationships and personal actions in a positive manner (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Hence, it can be concluded that practicing ethical leadership influences the employees in moral terms causing them to behave ethically (Ciulla, 2004). However, this ethical behavior is largely affected by the religious background which employees possess (Quddus, Bailey & White, 2009). In this respect, Islam makes it obligatory for the employees to put maximum effort so that they may achieve professional excellence by utilizing all their abilities (Ather & Sobhani, 2008). Because Islamic concept of ethics not only considers work as a virtue and obligation, but also emphasizes that hard work is a key to success on the job (Ali, 1988).

Rizk (2008) proposed that IWEs provide a basis for moral excellence and work orientation. These ethics shape, as a direction, the behavior of employees thus affecting their participation in the work (Ali & Al Owaihan, 2008). Yousef (2001), while working on IWE, found that Islamic work ethics moderate the relationships between organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Thus we perceive that Muslims employees having high level of IWE will exhibit greater satisfaction and commitment in the presence of ethical leadership.

H_{5a}: Islamic work ethics moderate the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' job satisfaction in such a way that relationship will be stronger when Islamic work ethics are high.

H_{5b}: Islamic work ethics moderate the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment in such a way that relationship will be stronger when Islamic work ethics are high.

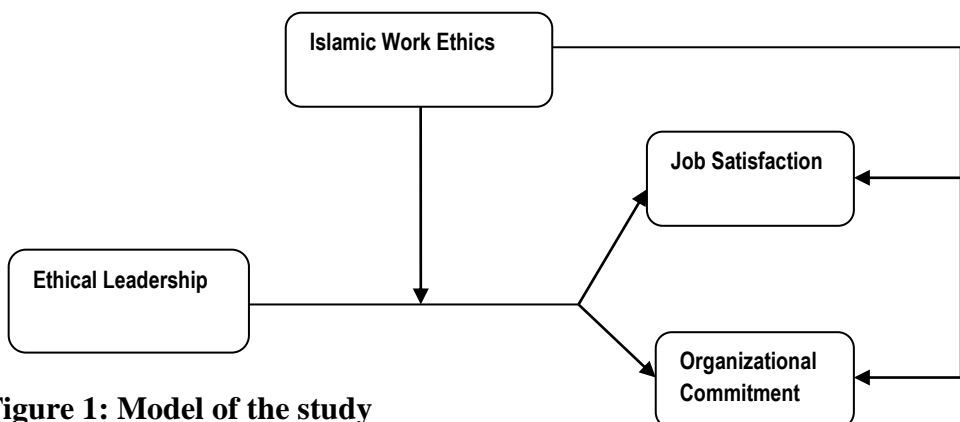


Figure 1: Model of the study

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

The sample for this study comprises of employees from service sector of Pakistan. Participants were affiliated with telecommunication companies, banks and schools both in public and private sector. The reason behind the selection of service sector is its ease of access and dominance in the country as a job rich sector and having an appropriate structure where all the variables included in research could be measured. 280 questionnaires were distributed among employees with a cover page assuring voluntary participation and strict anonymity of the respondents. Out of 280 questionnaires, 237 usable questionnaires were received back; response rate being 84.6 %. Among the respondents, 56.5% were males and the rest 43.5% females. The educational level ranged from intermediate to doctorate. The mean age of the respondent was 30.20 (S.D. = 7.15) and mean tenure was 5.34 (S.D. = 4.55).

3.2 Measures

A “self report” questionnaire was used for the measurement purpose comprising a five point Likert scale with “1 = strongly disagree” and “5 = strongly agree”. As English is a medium of instruction and official language of Pakistan so the questionnaire needed not to be translated in native language.

3.3 Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership was measured through a 10 item scale developed by Brown et al. (2005). Examples include “makes fair and balanced decisions” and “defines success not just by results but also the way that they are obtained”. Alpha reliability for this scale was .97.

3.4 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment was measured through a 3 item scale developed by Bozeman & Perrew (2001). An example includes “I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization”. The Cronbach alpha was .86.

3.5 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was also measured through a 3 item scale developed by Dubinsky and Harley (1986). An example of it is “I am generally satisfied with the feeling of worthwhile accomplishment I get from doing this job”. Alpha reliability of the scale was .89.

3.6 Islamic Work Ethics

Islamic work ethics were measured using an instrument of 17 items (short version) form developed by Ali (1992). Examples include, “dedication to work is a virtue”, “One should constantly work hard to meet responsibilities”, “Good work benefits both one’s self and others”. The Cronbach alpha was .85.

3.7 Control Variables

Tenure appeared as a control variable in this study.

4. Results

The correlations among all the study variables are shown in table 1. For all the included variables correlation is significant at ($p < 0.01$) level.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations and Reliabilities

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2	3	4
1. Ethical Leadership	3.73	1.007	(0.97)			
2. Organizational Commitment	3.67	0.86	.776**	(0.86)		
3. Job Satisfaction	3.84	0.93	.738**	.884**	(0.89)	
4. Islamic Work Ethics	4.14	0.402	.488**	.525**	.489**	(0.89)

** $p < 0.01$, $n = 237$

The correlation between ethical leadership and organizational commitment is ($r = 0.776$; $p < 0.01$) positive and significant and is in line with the hypothesis that ethical leadership is positively and significantly related to organizational commitment. The correlation between ethical leadership and job satisfaction ($r = 0.738$; $p < 0.01$) also supports the hypothesis that ethical leadership has a positive effect on job satisfaction. The correlation between Islamic Work Ethics and organizational commitment ($r = 0.525$; $p < 0.01$) gives support to the hypothesis that there is a positive effect of Islamic Work Ethics on organizational commitment. The positive correlation among Islamic Work Ethics and job satisfaction ($r = 0.489$; $p < 0.01$) also is in line with our hypothesis.

4.1 Regression Analysis

We used multiple regression analysis to test main effect hypotheses (see table 2). Results showed that ethical leadership has direct and positive impact on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.683$, $p < 0.01$), hence proving hypothesis 1. For ethical leadership and job satisfaction relationship, which is H₂ of our study, support was found ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < 0.01$). Results also confirmed that IWE has positive impact on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.192$, $p < 0.01$) and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.01$) leading to acceptance of H₃ and H₄ respectively.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Results

Predictors	Organizational Commitment			Job Satisfaction		
	β	R ²	ΔR^2	β	R ²	ΔR^2
Step 1						
Tenure	0.93	0.009	0.009	0.036	0.001	0.001
Step 2						
EL	0.683**			0.66**		
IWE	0.192**	0.630	0.622	0.17**	0.569	0.568
Step 3						
EL x IWE	1.105*	0.638	0.007	1.20*	0.572	0.10

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, N=237, control variable = tenure, EL = ethical leadership; IWE = Islamic work ethics

To test for interactive effect of ethical leadership and Islamic work ethics on job outcomes (organizational commitment and job satisfaction), moderated multiple regression analyses was used as suggested by Cohen *et al.* (2003). For this analysis, control variable (tenure) was entered in the first step, in the second step, independent variable and moderator were entered and finally interaction term of independent and moderating variable was entered. The results revealed that interaction term was significant for job satisfaction ($\beta = 1.105$, $p < 0.05$) as well as for organizational commitment ($\beta = 1.20$, $p < 0.05$) leading to acceptance of hypothesis 5a and 5b. This confirms that relationship of ethical leadership with job satisfaction and organizational commitment is stronger in case of employees having high Islamic Work ethics.

5. Discussion

The results of the study are a concrete proof for the selection of all the hypotheses. In the case of ethical leadership, the results replicate the previous findings. The study reports a significant and positive relationship between ethical leadership, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In past ethical leadership is found to be directly influencing job satisfaction and organizational commitment, in spite of partial mediation of ethical climate (Neubert et al., 2009). Similarly in an earlier study by Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing and Peterson (2008) a positive influence of ethical leadership on job satisfaction and organizational commitment has been reported. Hence employees having high ethical leadership reported high job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

For Islamic Work Ethics, the results are in line with the previous findings. In the study Islamic Work Ethics have been found to be significantly and positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Studies from past have also shown the similar results. In particular, the present research supports the study by Rokhman (2010) showing that employees who exhibit Islamic Work Ethics have a higher level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

The major contribution of this study is the interactive effect of Islamic Work Ethics in the relationship between ethical leadership, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Results showed that the relationship is strong for the employees possessing Islamic Work Ethics. Indeed when managers exhibit ethical leadership, the employees are satisfied and committed and this satisfaction and commitment increases when the level of Islamic Work Ethics is high. Thus employees with a high level of IWE lead organizations to the point, where they flourish dynamically because leaders are ethical and employees are satisfied and committed. As employees having high IWE work according to the teachings of Quran and Sunnah, they show a strong relationship with their organisations in terms of commitment and feel satisfied when leaders follow ethical style of leadership. Ethical leadership provides a platform for the employees who are high on Islamic work ethics. Subsequently, these Islamic work ethics reduce the negative relationship between ethical leadership and job outcomes (i.e. job satisfaction and organizational commitment).

5.1 Managerial Implications

Based on our findings, it is strongly recommended for organizational managers to adopt ethical leadership style to enhance the commitment of

employees with the organization and their satisfaction with their jobs. Top management in this regard can design and implement ethical leadership training programs for first line managers as they come in direct contact with the workers and operatives.

Moreover, as Islamic work ethics are very important component of Muslim belief system, managers need to be aware of IWE's importance in their organizations. In countries with high Muslim population the managers should form policies in accordance with the Islamic work ethics so as to attain a dynamic organizational setup. They should also try to ensure that the employees are high in IWE leading their organizations toward success because the implementation of Islamic work ethics help the organization as well as entire country to get rid of unethical corporate practices. It may also support any move for developing an ethical climate at broader level.

5.2 Limitations and future recommendations

Our study is based on a small sample that was conveniently selected which limits the generalizability of our findings. Future studies are recommended to use a large and more diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of these findings. Also, we collected cross sectional data using self report method from only employees. This can lead to the problem of common method bias. Future studies may use multi-source data collection and longitudinal designs. We examined the interactive effect of ethical leadership and IWE on only two outcomes. Future studies can include other outcomes like job performance, turnover intention, organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behaviours.

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